

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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S E C R E T STATE 005897

NODIS

FOL AMMAN 222 SENT ACTION SECSTATE JAN 8, 1978 REPEATED
TO YOU QUOTE

S E C R E T AMMAN 0222

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, JO, US, XF
SUBJECT: SHARAF VIEWS ON CURRENT SITUATION

1. IN COURSE OF A MEETING JANUARY 8 TO GO OVER
KING HUSSEIN'S POSITION ON PEACE NEGOTIATIONS
(SEPTEL), COURT MINISTER SHARAF TOOK TIME TO DRIVE HOME
SEVERAL POINTS WHICH HE SAID CONCERNED BOTH HIM AND KING.

2. MAIN THEME WAS THAT WEST, AND EUROPEANS IN PARTICULAR,
SEEMED TO HAVE ABANDONED AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE PEACE

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PROCESS NOW THAT EGYPT AND ISRAEL HAD GOTTEN TOGETHER.
FURTHER, U.S. SEEMED TO BE TAKING A POSITION, WITH
EUROPEANS FOLLOWING, THAT WAS PUSHING MORE ON THE ARABS
THAN ON THE ISRAELIS. INDEED, MOST EUROPEANS SEEMED TO
BE VISITING WITH SADAT AND PATTING HIM ON THE BACK, BUT
DOING LITTLE ELSE. I RETORTED TO SHARAF THAT HE SEEMED
TO HAVE MISSED A NUMBER OF MAJOR POINTS WHICH THE

PRESIDENT MADE DURING THE RETURN FLIGHT FROM BRUSSELS AND HAD BEEN PUBLISHED THIS MORNING. IN PARTICULAR, PRESS REPORTS INDICATED THE PRESIDENT WAS TALKING OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ISRAELIS ACCOMPANIED BY MINOR BORDER RECTIFICATIONS. THE PRESIDENT ALSO SUPPORTED SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE PALESTINIANS IN THE CONTEXT OF A TRANSITIONAL REGIME FOR THE WEST BANK.

3. SHARAF SAID HE RECOGNIZED THIS, BUT HE WAS GETTING A STEADY STREAM OF VISITORS WHO INTERPRETED AND CONTINUED TO INTERPRET THE PRESIDENT'S RECENT STATEMENTS AGAINST AN INDEPENDENT WEST BANK STATE AS BEING ESSENTIALLY FULL SUPPORT FOR THE BEGIN PLAN. SHARAF LET ME KNOW THAT HOWEVER MUCH JORDAN SUPPORTED THE IDEA OF EVENTUALLY ARRIVING AT A RESTRICTED CHOICE IN TERMS OF PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION, AT THE PRESENT TIME IN THE ARAB WORLD IT WAS VERY BAD TACTICS IN HIS VIEW TO ELIMINATE ONE OF THE POSSIBLE OPTIONS. HE SAID THAT AFTER ALL JORDAN HAD LIVED AND SURVIVED IN THE ARAB WORLD WITH ITS RADICAL NEIGHBORS UNDER CONDITIONS MUCH WORSE THAN ISRAEL WOULD EVER FACE WITH A PALESTINIAN STATE. JORDAN DID NOT FAVOR SUCH A STATE, BUT IT COULD SEE GRAVE PROBLEMS ARISING IF THERE WERE APRIORI ATTEMPTS TO MAKE SELF-DETERMINATION BY THE PALESTINIANS WIDELY RESTRICTED IN TERMS OF THE CHOICE AVAILABLE TO THEM. I POINTED OUT TO SHARAF IN TURN THAT ISRAEL WAS CLEARLY NOT
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PREPARED TO ENTER INTO ANY PEACE ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD ALLOW LIBYANS, IRAQIS, PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS, OR THE SOVIETS CONSTANTLY TO FOMENT TROUBLE AND SEND TEAMS ACROSS THE BORDER TO BOMB AND SHOOT IN ISRAEL. SHARAF SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE POINT, BUT THOUGHT IT COULD ALL BE HANDLED WITH MORE FINESSE IF WE DID NOT BEGIN BY AUTOMATICALLY ELIMINATING ANY OPTIONS WHICH WORRIED THE ISRAELIS. IN A SENSE, HE SAID, IT APPEARED ALL TOO CLEAR THAT AT THE TIME WHEN SADAT NEEDED HELP MOST, THE U.S. WAS LEANING HARDEST ON THE ARABS, NOT THE ISRAELIS.

4. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO REASSURE SHARAF THAT A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES REMAINED OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO US, THAT THE SECRETARY WOULD BE IN JERUSALEM, AND THAT WE WOULD BE WORKING ON THIS PROBLEM.

5. COMMENT: I BELIEVE SHARAF'S VIEWS TEND TO SUMMARIZE CURRENT FEELING IN BOTH WELL-INFORMED AREAS OF JORDAN PUBLIC OPINION AND AMONG THOSE WHO MERELY REACT TO WHAT IS GOING ON. AS IN ALL ISSUES IN THE ARAB WORLD, EARS ARE CLOSE TO THE GROUND READY TO INTERPRET ALL REMARKS IN THE MOST PESSIMISTIC

LIGHT, AND AT THIS POINT ARE STILL NOT CONVINCED OF U.S. WILLINGNESS GENUINELY TO PUSH THE ISRAELIS ALONG THE ROAD IN THE PEACE PROCESS. THE FACT THAT SHARAF, NORMALLY A STRONG SUPPORTER, SHOULD TAKE THIS MOOD SERIOUSLY ENOUGH TO RAISE IT FORMALLY WITH ME RE-ENFORCES CONCERN WIDELY SHARED HERE THAT SADAT'S POSITION AFTER JERUSALEM IN THE ARAB WORLD AND IN TERMS OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR IT, IS BEING ERODED AWAY. ARABS STILL SEE THE BEGIN RESPONSE AS FAILING TO MEET THE HIGH EXPECTATIONS THEY FORMED AS A RESULT OF SADAT'S PERSONAL GESTURE IN GOING TO JERUSALEM. PICKERING UNQUOTE VANCE

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